

House Republican Press Release

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In Remembrance of September 11, 2001



By Representative Toni Boucher, September 10, 2004

Every time I go to church I walk by a stone at the entrance with the names of five dads, who left behind eleven children when they were killed on September 11, 2001. It is a stark and constant reminder of that day.

Just a few days ago, however, I inadvertently ran across an e-mail I received on September 12, 2001 from a business colleague, Kathy, who works on the west coast. It read:

You are at the office kind of late, isn't it 7 p.m. in CT? Are you all feeling a little vulnerable on the east coast? I live near a Trident Submarine and Missile base, so if things get more serious... well...let's not speculate. We had a special Mass at noon in our chapel on campus; we prayed for peace and wisdom for our leaders to make the right decision. That's all we can do now. Kathy

Of course, I responded quickly.

Thank you Kathy. You are so very right. We are all feeling enormous sadness as more and more of our neighbors and friends are pronounced dead, or missing. They are setting up a staging area in Connecticut for the many bodies they expect to recover. We all know someone and all three of my children are in Washington DC. One works three blocks from the White House and lives two blocks from the State Department. Another saw the explosion at the Pentagon, watched it burn from the roof of his dorm at Georgetown University, and cried. The other works in and out of those government buildings all day long. There was a time yesterday that I became desperate, but have talked to them at length now. We are creating a memorial service for the entire community soon for we are so affected; many people from here work in New York, and vast numbers of them in the financial centers.

Please say a prayer for us all. But remember that we are a resilient, amazing country and we will rise above this, making ourselves stronger and wiser than before. As in families that confront tragedy, we will unify and show the world what makes us special. Best to you, and your family, Toni

Here is a slightly edited excerpt of a letter my son wrote for his college newspaper published a week later.

I had Tuesday morning timed perfectly. Glancing at the blurry alarm clock, I had just enough time to roll from my bed to the shower to class. 9:48 a.m. Perfect. The bathroom: Wha . . . ? Did someone run into our door again? I hope Matt didn't eat the last Pop-Tart. The kitchen: Mmmm....cinnamon Pop-Tart ... why's everyone running around out there? Oh -----, it's 10:03 ... better grab the food and go.

I live in Village A on Prospect Street. On a clear day, you can see for miles across the Potomac. I'd just locked the door when two neighbors ran by.

"...and you can see it from the roof!"

"When did they bomb it?"

"It wasn't a bomb, a plane crashed into it just-"

WHAT

Their voices vanished up the steps leading to the rooftop. I looked up, and saw a hundred fingers of gray smoke curling toward the morning sun. The Pop-Tart shattered on the sidewalk.

The rooftop was a scene of sedate chaos. America's fortress was belching smoke that seemed to block out Rosslyn. Inside apartments, televisions blared. People cursed their cell phones. The South Tower crumbled. A girl shouted, to no one in particular, "I'M NOT GOING OUTSIDE! I DON'T WANNA GET BOMBED!" And I had no idea where my father was. It would be five hours before I spoke to him. On that Tuesday, we were speechless.

We lived in an age of irony. We came of age free from the fear of annihilation. War was a production of CNN in a land far, far away. We saw on the screens the heroic and tragic exploits of our parents and grandparents. The screen made them giants, and we felt small. We lived in the peace they had won, and our time had produced ... what? The X Games? Napster? It seemed as if history would forget our time of scandals and surplus. So we built a wall of irony to reject the world. We reveled in the Daily Show, read Maxim, and found jokes for the world's misfortunes.

On that Tuesday, there were no jokes. The wall of irony has been ripped down. History had found us. There we are at war with an enemy we can't see, can't find, and can't bomb from a thousand miles away.

*It's overwhelming. No one knows where this will go from here. Our grandparents never foresaw a four-year war, the bloodiest in history, which would culminate in forty years of nuclear stalemate. How could our parents have known that the Kennedy assassination would lead to a war that would rip the country apart? The repercussions from this attack could last two years or two decades. It will ask more from us, as a generation, than we ever thought we could give. We have to defend ideals in a shadow war, ideals which have until now been a sarcastic joke given only lip service. Columnists and pundits from past generations call us soft, weak and spoiled. They say we grew up in prosperity and lack the will to lead. **I say courage knows no economic background.** History, as it did to our grandparents and parents, demands that we stand up and face it.*

We can. And we will.

Over time memories will diminish and the pain will subside for those not directly affected by The World Trade Center Attack. But we CANNOT forget. It is critically important to carry on the memory of the people who lost their lives in the terrorists' attacks.

The State of Connecticut and Governor M. Jodi Rell remembered this past Thursday with a deeply moving ceremony dedicated to our September 11 victims and their families at Sherwood Island. The heartbreak was evident when eyes welled up and emotions overflowed as each name of a loved one was read, especially as one little boy excitedly cried out "That was Daddy's name Mom, that was Daddy's name." His mom remained motionless until it was time to lay a single white rose on a stone inscribed with his daddy's name.

The tip of Sherwood State Park is a fitting site for this memorial. The state, with generous contributions from Connecticut businesses, schools and nonprofits, has placed over 150 etched granite plaques with the names of each precious Connecticut life lost in a circle close to the ocean. Three granite stone benches

overlook the individual stones, as if standing guard and providing a peaceful clear view of Long Island Sound. It is a place for family members, parents and the public at large to pay their respect and to meditate.

Connecticut's Living Memorial site is also a good place for parents to bring their children to learn and remember. I encourage the citizens and families of our community to take time to visit and reflect. Undoubtedly, like me, you will find the trip profoundly moving. We should never forget what transpired by not only supporting the victims, and their families, so many of whom are still suffering, but also by acknowledging the countless acts of courage and kindness. For in the forms of humanity's worst cruelties, we discover over and over again man's capacity for kindness and selflessness.

I leave you with another request. No matter where we originated from, we Americans must stand together. Our unity and resolve cannot diminish over time.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren who will inherit this earth after we are gone. We owe it to the courage of all those who died in wars before us that have allowed us to have so many peaceful years of liberty and security. We owe this to the thousands of innocent victims of September 11 and also the brave servicemen and women who have given up their lives since so that we can be here today- out of harm's way - to enjoy the Oyster Festival and other such events with our families.

Thank you

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